



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined 124 organizations in [a letter](#) to Congress opposing S.J. Res.109/H.J. Res. 151, which would use the Congressional Review Act to overturn the management plan for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and set a dangerous precedent for management plans across federal land agencies.

We joined the National Parks Conservation Association and National Wildlife Federation in submitting [comments](#) to Mariposa County (CA) asking it to reject a housing development adjacent to the community of West Yosemite and Yosemite National Park, arguing that there are no provisions in place to ensure it complies with non-transient housing stipulations, cannot effectively mitigate health and safety issues, and will have significant environmental impacts.

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) to the National Park Service requesting an immediate clarification to the public comment period length for a proposed rule about hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska. A Department of the Interior press release stated the comment period would be 60 days, while the Federal Register Notice gives only 30 days. We urged a 60-day comment period to allow time to respond to the nuances of the latest legal rationale, which is the third change to the rule in eight years.

Coalition Executive Council member Elaine Leslie provided [testimony](#) to the Maryland House of Environment and Transportation Committee in favor of phasing out lead ammunition to support wildlife populations.

We continue to provide statements and interviews to the media highlighting challenges to the National Park System. Recent work includes:

- [Backdoor procedures undermine Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and all](#)

[public lands](#), press release

- [Advocates reject proposal to allow bear baiting on national parklands in Alaska](#), joint press release with National Parks Conservation Association and Denali Citizens Council

National/Regional NPS Updates

A summary of news pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System and its programs, or intersecting with the parks on a more regional basis.

- *Ongoing censorship*
 - E&E News published [an article](#) outlining the difficulty the Department of the Interior has had in completing censorship at parks due to the sheer depth of items flagged and the lack of standards to measure necessity. Source: *E&E News*
 - *The New York Times* also published an article highlighting the inconsistencies in the review and censorship of flagged materials, and a lack of transparency about criteria used. Source: [The New York Times](#)
 - *Editor note: The Coalition is part of an ongoing lawsuit against the Department of the Interior for its attempts to censor American history.*
- *2025 NPS visitation stats* - On March 13, the NPS announced its 2025 visitation stats, recording 323 million recreation visits. 26 parks set visitation records. The top most-visited sites were Blue Ridge Parkway, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Hunting practices allowed in Alaska (again)* - On March 6, the Department of the Interior announced a proposed rule that would override an existing rule to allow Alaska state hunting regulations to apply on national preserves within the state, such as Denali National Preserve. *[Editor note: The rule has changed three times in eight years and has been heavily litigated. The Coalition has spoken out against practices currently allowed under Alaska law, including bear baiting, arguing that federal agencies should have regulatory control over the lands they manage. See our press release above.]* Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Uniforms to be made in USA* - On March 15, the Department of the Interior announced that it will prioritize the purchase of uniforms and other textiles from American manufacturers. Though the current NPS contract for uniforms is with a Tennessee-based company they source much of their stock from off-shore manufacturers. Their existing contract will remain in place through 2027. It is unclear if staff's uniform credits will increase to match the increased cost of uniforms incurred by the policy. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Climate change vulnerability of national parks* - New research published in *Conservation Letters: A Journal of the Society for Conservation Biology* identifies 174 national park units that are "exposed to one or more potentially transformative climate impacts, including fire, drought, sea-level rise, and forest pests and diseases." This represents 67% of the parks

they analyzed. Source: [Society for Conservation Biology](#)

- *Analysis about privatizing public land for housing* - *Scientific American* published [an op-ed](#) analyzing the pros and cons of selling public land. It argues that public lands previously proposed for sale under Senator Mike Lee's failed bill last year are poorly suited to solve the housing crisis and would lose the ecological benefits that support the American economy and well-being. Source: *Scientific American*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On March 5, the NPS began rehabilitation on several sections of road, from milepost 280-285 near Parkway School Road, and from milepost 291.8-305.1 near Beacon Heights and US221 (North Carolina). Intermittent closures will be in place. This project is a phase of an ongoing project funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. The full project is expected to be complete in Fall 2026. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Clara Barton National Historic Site* - On March 5, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for a project to rehabilitate the former home of Clara Barton. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park* - On March 9, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Old 41 Highway widening and improvement project, which would realign the highway to improve safety and multiuse opportunities. Source: [Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - On March 9, the NPS announced the return of fireworks to the park, which will occur on July 3 in celebration of the United States' 250th anniversary. Tickets will be by lottery, submitted between April 8 and 12. Source: [Mount Rushmore National Memorial](#)
- *The White House and President's Park* - The proposed design for the White House expansion includes a new screening facility for visitors, located underground beneath Sherman Park. The current visitor screening process includes a series of "temporary tents and trailers." The addition would reduce visual impact and create a permanent home for screening. Source: [The Architect's Newspaper](#)
- *Wrangell - St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - On March 16, the NPS announced the opening of commercial use authorization applications for event services at the Kennecott Recreation Hall. Applications will be accepted through April 14. Source: [Wrangell - St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)

Park People

Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members and other former park employees or volunteers. People are listed alphabetically by last name.

Deceased

- Ernest E. Barnes, 75, passed away on March 12. Ernest and his partner Ginny volunteered for the NPS at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park for many years in their retirement. Source: [Legacy/Grace Funeral Home - Goliad](#)
- William Robert “Bobby” “Bob” Bland, 81, passed away on February 26. Bob worked for the NPS at Colonial National Historical Park during law school in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Source: [Williamsburg Yorktown Daily](#)
- Robert “Bob” Franz Burger, 96, passed away on January 24. Bob volunteered in his retirement at Rocky Mountain National Park for a time. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- Terry Seymour Chilcoat, 88, passed away on February 24. Terry worked for the NPS for a time at Smoky Mountains National Park. Source: [Knox News](#)
- Martha-Ann R. Crevier, 78, passed away on February 27. Martha worked for 30 years as regional manager for Eastern National, a National Park Service partner. Source: [Cape Cod Times](#)
- Elinore Molyneaux Porter Herriman, 103, passed away on February 21. Elinore worked for a summer as a “park nurse” at Yellowstone National Park, then followed the NPS career of her partner, Walter Herriman, including time at Grand Canyon National Park, Virgin Islands National Park, and Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Source: [Las Cruces Sun News](#)
- Mary Linderman Little, 90, passed away on February 27. Mary worked as a campground host at Butte Lake in Lassen Volcanic National Park for a time. Source: [Record Searchlight](#)
- Rosemary “Rose” Keating passed away on March 5. Rose worked at Glacier National Park for many years. Source: Kathy Dimont
- Elizabeth “Liz” Martin, 76, passed away on March 27. Liz volunteered at Yosemite National Park for a time. Source: [The Press Democrat](#)
- Ralph Larry Morrison, 84, passed away on March 6. Ralph “served in the maintenance department for the National Park System” for a time. Source: [The Johnston County Report](#)
- Herbert “Herb” Joel Pierce, 82, passed away on February 9. He worked for the NPS for several seasons at Wind Cave National Park and Badlands National Park. Source: [Lost Coast Outpost](#)

Retired

- Kim Fuller, director of Friends of Jimmy Carter National Historical Park, retired on March 1, after serving in the role since 2012. Kim is the niece of former President Jimmy Carter. She will continue to support the organization in a new role as the Carter Family Legacy Liaison. Source: [WALB](#)

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *Buffalo National River* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a river management plan. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Capitol Reef National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 3](#) on a plan to improve visitor access and circulation in the park. Source: [Capitol Reef National Park](#)
- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through April 1](#) on a proposal to replace the water and wastewater systems at Elk Creek Marina and Campground and Lake Fork Marina and Campground. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Public comment is [open through April 11](#) on a vista management plan for the 2.65-mile section of the parkway between Spout Run and the Glebe Road Bridge. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 5](#) on a proposal to rehabilitate the water systems and utilities for the North Rim and inner canyon. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 30](#) on preliminary concepts for a “small, community-scaled housing” for staff on previously-disturbed park-owned land in Kelly, Wyoming. Source: [Buckrail](#)
- *Los Angeles Coastal Area Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through April 6](#) on a Special Resource Study of the Los Angeles coast for possible inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a proposal to allow bicycle use on 37 miles of multi-use trails in the park and allow horse riding on the Houchin Ferry North/Ollie Road. Source: [Blue Ridge Outdoors](#)
- *Memphis Area Lynching Sites Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through April 3](#) on a Special Resource Study of eight sites in Tennessee for possible inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *National Capital Parks - East* - Public comment is [open through March 27](#) on a proposal to extend Suitland Parkway Trail and make intersection improvements to support safety and connectivity. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)
- *Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - Public comment is [open through April 1](#) on a proposal to relocate the Fort Caroline National Memorial to an upland location out of the floodplain. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, hearings, and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

March 4 - The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered favorably reported a number of business items including:

- S. 815, to designate the outdoor amphitheater at the Blue Ridge Music Center in Galax, Virginia, as the “Rick Boucher Amphitheater.” The amphitheater is a facility within Blue Ridge Parkway.
- S.1135, to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bonneville Shoreline Trail in the state of Utah, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute, and an amendment to the title.
- S. 2102, to establish the Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, as a unit of the National Park System.
- The nomination of Stevan Pearce, of New Mexico, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

House of Representatives Actions

March 2 - The House filed reports on two bills concerning the National Park Service/System:

- H.R. 5254, the “Gateway Partnership Act of 2025,” which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to host private events in Gateway Arch National Park buildings, and for other purposes. The Gateway Arch Park Foundation, a nonprofit organization, serves as the official philanthropic partner of the Park.
- H.R. 5729, the “North Rim Restoration Act of 2025,” which would authorize direct emergency acquisition flexibilities for the National Park Service for the purpose of retaining, vetting, approving, and expediting contractor approval for the clearing, rebuilding, maintenance, and improvement of the Grand Canyon grounds that have been impacted by the Dragon Bravo Fire.

March 3 - The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

- H.R. 6365, the “Wintergreen Emergency Egress Act,” which would require the Secretary of the Interior to issue a right-of-way for an emergency exit on certain National Park Service land along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the State of Virginia. The right-of-way is generally depicted as ‘Proposed Egress’ on the map entitled ‘Blue Ridge Parkway, Proposed Wintergreen Emergency Egress Near Milepost 9.6’, numbered 601/194,694, and dated September 2024.
- H.R. 1945, “America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark Act,” which would designate the museum and the Churchill memorial currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark and directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special Resource Study to determine the eligibility of the Landmark in Fulton, Missouri, on the grounds of Westminster College to be a unit of the National Park System.
- H.R. 4386, as amended, the “America the Beautiful Motorcycle Fairness Act,” which would amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to clarify entrance privileges for vehicles with respect to the America the Beautiful interagency pass.

March 5 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills including H.R. 2709, the “Save Our Sequoias Act.” It was ordered reported, as amended. The bill provides for the conservation of giant sequoia trees (*sequoiadendron giganteum*) in California. It specifically provides statutory authority to create the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition and outlines the coalition's duties. The bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate with the governor of California and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to work together to protect California’s giant sequoia trees found on national park lands, national forest lands and other public lands in California. Representatives from Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Yosemite National Park shall serve on the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition.

March 12 - The House filed reports on two bills concerning the National Park Service/System:

- H.R. 2709, the “Save Our Sequoias Act” (see March 5 entry) to improve the health and resiliency of giant sequoias, and for other purposes. Filed with an amendment.
- H.R. 6380, to establish Chiricahua National Park in the state of Arizona as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes. Filed with amendments. (The act would redesignate Chiricahua National Monument as Chiricahua National Park.)

Other Relevant Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service (Department of Agriculture) News

- *Conservation grants restored* - On March 12, a federal court ordered \$14 million in Interior Department grant funding for conservation work that was terminated in September 2025 to be restored on March 19. The recipient organizations were targeted for “proclaim[ing] diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) values,” though none of the targeted grants were

funding DEI initiatives. Source: [Democracy Forward](#)

- *Analysis of Roadless Rule* - *Mountain Journal* published [an analysis](#) of the justification for repealing the U.S. Forest Service's Roadless Rule, which has been proposed by the Department of Agriculture. It concludes that the rationale behind the effort is misguided and likely to create little economic or safety benefit. Source: *Mountain Journal*
- *Offshore energy leases* - On March 11, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced that its recent oil and gas sale generated \$47 million in revenue for 25 blocks covering 141,000 acres of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Eisenhower National Historic Site, Gettysburg National Military Park

Chronic wasting disease

On March 5, the NPS announced that deer removed at each park as part of regular reduction operations tested positive for chronic wasting disease. It is the first known case at Gettysburg. The park asks visitors to report sick wildlife and to avoid contact with animals. Source: [Gettysburg National Park](#)

George Washington Memorial Parkway

Driver killed by tree

On March 12, during a storm, a tree fell on a car on the parkway near Donaldson Run Trail in Arlington, Virginia, killing the driver. Source: [KJCT8](#)

Haleakalā National Park, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Heavy storms

On March 12, closures at both parks were enacted due to dangerous weather conditions, including sustained winds of over 75 miles per hour and heavy rain. Power lines went down and flooding and other storm-related damage were reported. At Hawai'i Volcanoes, the park stated they "could reopen some areas on Monday, March 16," but were not yet sure. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#), Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ([3/12](#), [3/15](#))

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Eruptions

On March 10, Kīlauea erupted for nine hours, with lava fountains of 1,300 feet and volcanic rock and glass fragments (tephra) spread across roadways and overlooks. On March 11, the park was able to reopen Crater Rim Drive West from the park entrance to Kilauea Military Camp. The

Uēkahuna overlook and parking lot were covered in tephra up to a foot deep and remain closed.

Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Measles

On March 3, a person visited the park while infected with measles, traveling through the Welcome Center at Kilauea Military Camp and several outdoor locations. The Hawai'i Department of Health is leading the public health response, and anyone who has been exposed can contact them with questions or concerns. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Vandalizers sentenced

On July 25, 2025, the NPS observed several boats that had carved large letters into cliff faces at the park and collected over 100 pounds of rocks to illegally take home. On December 9, 2025, three visitors were fined \$500 each, and the fourth was fined \$750. All four were banned from the park for one year. Source: [WILX](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Bird flu

On February 25, park staff observed an increased number of deceased common murres on park beaches, correlating with a "broader regional seabird mortality event affecting beaches throughout the San Francisco Bay Area." On March 10, the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center determined that preliminary testing indicated highly pathogenic avian influenza. The NPS is working closely with partners to monitor wildlife health and assess conditions at the park. Visitors are encouraged to never approach or handle wildlife and to report sick or dead animals to park staff. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - On March 6, the NPS and Carlisle (PA) Police Department arrested a 36-year-old for two felony counts of destruction of veterans' memorials at Little Round Top in September 2025 (see [9/17/25 Coalition Report](#)). The individual is believed to have caved their initials on the plaque of the 44th New York Infantry Monument and on the face of Colonel Patrick O'Rorke on the 140th New York Infantry Monument. The damage is estimated at \$11,000. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, North Cascades National Park* - On March 5, the NPS announced they have secured funding to partially rebuild a "temporary emergency road" on Company Creek Road in Stehekin following significant damage from floods in December 2025 (see [12/24/25](#) and [2/18/26 Coalition Reports](#)). 1,000 linear feet and a 400-foot levee were lost, eliminating safe vehicle access. The NPS hopes to complete the

temporary road before spring runoff, conditions pending. Additional recovery in the region is underway, though the wastewater treatment remains inoperable. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)

- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - On March 5, the park reopened the Green River Ferry for the first time since it was damaged in a flood in Spring 2025 (see [4/30/25 Coalition Report](#)). While the ferry underwent repairs, they also sandblasted it, repainted it, and gave it a new generator and engine. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)

Corrections

In the 3/4/26 *Coalition Report*, we mistakenly reported that Rocky Mountain National Park would be rescinding its reservation system for day use. However, they will keep their reservation system intact, while several other parks have rescinded theirs. Thank you to Kristi Neilson for bringing this to our attention.

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to: report@protectnps.org.

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service.

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